Amendments to the claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

Listing of Claims:

1-10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) A method of producing a separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content, the method ~~com- prising~~ comprising ~~the~~ steps of:

providing ~~said~~ a microbially contaminated separation matrix~~, microbially contaminated,~~ in a housing or container, wherein the microbially contaminated separation matrix comprises a polymeric porous material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane;

adding an aqueous antimicrobial preservation ~~com-position~~ composition, which comprises at least one alkyl paraben, to said separation matrix in said housing or container;

allowing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition to exert its effect in said housing or container until the number of colony forming units (CFU) per g preservative composition is sufficiently reduced; and

rinsing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition from said housing or container to provide the separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content.

12. (original) The method as in claim 11, wherein said at least one alkyl paraben is methyl paraben, ethyl paraben, propyl paraben, or butyl paraben.

13. (cancelled)

14. (currently amended) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of methyl paraben is between 0.5 and 2 ~~g·l^{-1}~~ g/liter.

15. (currently amended) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of ethyl paraben is between 0.01 and 0.5 ~~g·l^{-1}~~ g/liter.

16. (currently amended) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of propyl paraben is between ~~0.25~~0.12 and 0.25 ~~g·l^{-1}~~ g/liter.

17. (currently amended) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of butyl paraben is at least 0.002 ~~g.l^{-1}~~ g/liter.

18. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition further comprises a solubility increasing agent at a concentration that is sufficient to maintain said at least one alkyl paraben in solution.

19. (original) The method as in claim 18, wherein said solubility increasing agent is propylene glycol.

20. (currently amended) The method as in claim 9, wherein the concentration of said propylene glycol is not more than 20 ~~g.l^{-1}~~ g/liter.

21. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is sterilized before it is added to said separation matrix.

22. (original) The method as in claim 21, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is sterilized by means of steam or filter sterilization.

23. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is allowed to exert its effect for at least 6 h.

24. (currently amended) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is allowed to exert its effect until ~~US and/or European pharmacopeia~~ EP 1997 test protocol is fulfilled.

Support for Amendments:

Claim 1 is amended to characterize the separation matrix as comprising a polymeric porous material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane. This amendment is supported by the specification on page 6, lines 20-26.

Claim 1 is additionally amended to characterize the step of "rinsing" to provide the separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content. As a result, the "rinsing" step is consistent with the preamble of the claim.

Claim 11 is additionally amended to correct certain typographical errors.

Claim 13 is cancelled.

Claim 16 is amended to provide a range of propyl paraben between 0.12 and 0.25 g/liter. This amendment is supported by the specification at page 11 and page 9, lines 9-19.

Claims 14-17 and 18 are amended to clarify that the units are g/liter. It is submitted that one having ordinary skill in the art clearly understands that the units presented in those claims are g/liter.

Claim 24 is amended to refer to EP 1997 test protocol. This amendment is supported by the specification at page 13, lines 5-20.

Claims 1-10 are cancelled. The Applicants reserve the right to pursue the cancelled claims in a Divisional patent application.

No matter is introduced by this amendment, and entry thereof is requested. Upon entry, claims 11, 12, and 14-24 are active in this application.